



CONFERENCE OF INGOs  
OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

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CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

## Activity report of the Social Rights Action Committee

April 2022

### General Aspects

The Committee was created by the General Assembly of the Conference of INGOs on 28 April 2021. Since its creation the Committee has met in plenary 8 times (on average once a month). At the beginning of its work, the Committee discussed and decided on the organisation of its work. Jean Bernard Marie was elected Rapporteur of the Committee. The members also drew up a list of activities to achieve the objectives of its mandate. These activities were grouped into thematic/operational axes. The coordinators of these axes were also chosen by the committee members.

Out of 6 objectives of the Committee voted in the mandate, namely :

- **Raise awareness and promote knowledge on the rights guaranteed by the ESC among INGOs and their members in the field;**
- Strengthen advocacy with all stakeholders for the full ratification by all Member States of all articles of the Charter as well as for a more generalized acceptance of the collective complaints mechanism
- **To encourage national or local associations to identify cases or situations of violation of rights guaranteed by the ESC and to support them in the collective complaints process that would be triggered;**
- **To ensure the participation of the Conference of INGOs in the ongoing reform of the Charter system**
- **Fight against poverty: bring the expertise of NGOs to fight against all forms of poverty, on all levels**

- Strengthen the action of INGOs represented in Brussels and Strasbourg to promote the EU social rights base in synergy with the ECSR system.

4 objectives underlined in bold are in progress. The activities planned to achieve these objectives are partly completed.

### **In terms of activities :**

The Committee, in partnership with the Social Rights Department of the CoE has planned a cycle of webinars (objective 1, 2 webinars 29 March and 14 June 2022) on the impact of the monitoring instruments of the Social Charter and the contribution of civil society to these processes. The first webinar was very informative regarding the reporting procedure and the Collective Complaints Protocol. 3 collective complaints, ended by decisions of the European Committee of Social Rights (ECSR) and the Committee of Ministers, were discussed. For each complaint, this discussion was led by the INGO claimant, the rapporteur within the ECSR and a representative of the Social Charter Department of the Council of Europe. Technical and political questions on the place of civil society in both procedures were widely discussed.

In addition, the Committee was consulted by two national civil society organisations (objective 2) to strengthen a collective recommendation currently being written and to reflect on how to address issues faced by adults with autism through the collective complaints protocol.

### **Focus on the Social Rights Tracker tool**

Using the Social Rights Tracker, we will create a watchdog platform to collect and document testimonies of all situations where the rights and dignity of any person are undermined. On the one hand, it will provide a safe and confidential channel for reporting, so as not to further endanger people and NGOs. On the other it will establish a public domain to highlight measures that weaken social rights, offering support for advocacy, including facilitating collective complaints to be elaborated under the monitoring mechanism of the European Social Charter, by civil society actors committed to respecting human rights and dignity.

At the same time, the Tracker will also offer an opportunity to highlight good practices from amongst NGOs, institutional bodies, and mechanisms, in both the Council of Europe and the European Union, as well as stories where, through solidarity and support for advocacy, injustices against people's social rights are successfully and rightfully challenged and overcome. This public component of the Social Rights Tracker will be an online tracking platform, providing a mechanism for sharing and alerting, while a second secure component

will be available only to registered civil society organisations, so that they can report, in safe manner, the cases where the rights and dignity of vulnerable people are undermined, and the obstacles placed in the way of civil society support.

At this stage, the ethical guidelines for the functioning of the tool have been drawn up by the Committee. The provider for the construction of the website (with the necessary precautions for data security) has been found. The INGO Service Association has given the green light to finance the website.

A Memorandum of Understanding has been drawn up between the Committee and the Joint Research Unit on Law, Religion, Enterprise and Society (UMR 7354 DRES), University of Strasbourg. The latter is interested in the tracker project and in contributing to the analysis of the information collected and to the functioning of this future platform.

### **Focus on the ongoing reform of the Revised European Social Charter System**

In June 2021, the Committee adopted the position on the reform of the Treaty system of the European Social Charter which it transmitted to the Standing Committee of the Conference of INGOs. The latter adopted it in August 2021 and forwarded it to the relevant Council of Europe bodies.

This document gave concrete expression to the Committee's intention to strengthen the contribution of the Conference of INGOs to the discussions on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the Charter and the 25th anniversary of the revised Charter. Through this document, the Conference calls for the effective guarantee of social rights for all and the strengthening of the effectiveness of the control mechanism in which civil society will play an essential role.

Recently, in relation to the ongoing reform, the Conference of INGOs was invited to participate in the ad hoc Working Group set up by the Committee of Ministers on the improvement of the European Social Charter system (WG-CHARTE). The President of the Conference and the Rapporteur of our Committee intervened at the meeting held on 18 March in person and exchanged with the representatives of the Committee of Ministers on the expectations of INGOs concerning the reinforcement of the effectiveness of the Social Charter.

Subsequently, direct bilateral exchanges between representatives of our Committee and Ambassadors were initiated on improving the effectiveness of the system for protecting social rights. These exchanges are continuing and a letter will be sent in the next few days to all the permanent representatives recalling the position and proposals of the Conference of INGOs with a view to the final report of the ad hoc working group scheduled for the end of April.

**Focus on the event "Precariousness or slavery, it's not a job! Is decent and freely undertaken work for ALL possible?"**

The high-level event was organised on 18 October 2021 by the Conference of INGOs (through the Committee) on the occasion of the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty and the European Day against Trafficking in Human Beings.

To explore the issue of decent work - Articles 1, 2, 3, 4 and 26 of the Revised European Social Charter, the Committee launched a call for contributions to INGOs in July 2021. Starting from the experience of the people concerned regarding access to the above-mentioned rights, the event (ceremony on the forecourt of the Council of Europe and webinar) aimed at amplifying good practices and initiating political actions, in order to rebuild the post-pandemic reality in a more just and equitable way regarding the right to decent work.

The ceremony in front of the memorial slab for victims of poverty was opened by Gerhard ERMISCHER, President of the Conference of INGOs. It allowed people who have been victims of trafficking and whose rights to decent work have been undermined to speak in the presence of Ms Marija PEJCINOVIC BURIC, Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Mr Harry Alex RUSZ, Chairman of the Council of Europe Ministers' Deputies, Permanent Representative of Hungary to the Council, Mr Leendert VERBEEK, President of the Congress of Local Authorities and Regions of the Council of Europe, Robert SPANO, President of the European Court of Human Rights, Carole ZIELINSKI, Deputy Mayor of Strasbourg, Eliane CHEMLA, Vice-President of the European Committee of Social Rights. The speeches given by the Council of Europe personalities can be found on their respective web pages.

**This ceremony was followed by a hybrid format event. Participants in this part of the day called on Council of Europe member states to**

- 1) Adopt and respect the revised European Social Charter and the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings.

- 2) Enable all young people to have access to education and training leading to dignified work with an adequate wage. Enable all people to have lifelong learning and access to decent work ([Soroptimist Italy : example of the work with the women in prison](#))
- 3) Enable all long-term unemployed people to have access to decent work, and consequently to respect for their dignity and the exercise of citizenship. Take inspiration from the concept of [Zero Long-Term Unemployed Territory](#) set up in France by ATD Fourth World, and which will be extended to 300 territories.
- 4) Ensure that the marketing of products manufactured in conditions that do not respect human rights is banned, in Europe or elsewhere: legislate and raise public awareness. (see draft resolution to the EU introduced by French MP Dominique Potier on the duty of vigilance of multinationals; [advocacy and awareness-raising by Artisans du Monde](#))
- 5) Develop structures for the support of victims of trafficking in human beings. Take the example of the three [Legal Centres for the accompaniment of victims of human trafficking](#) in Belgium, which has led the public authorities to increase the resources of the services involved and to give victims a longer-term legal status.
- 6) Preventing sexual exploitation and trafficking in human beings, in Europe and in different countries at risk, e.g. in Africa ([Albania Hope, Renate](#) and [Stop the traffik](#)).

**At the end, we thank all the INGOs and their representatives who have contributed to this work, with dynamism, commitment and creativity**